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Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001

Emo Session
July 10, 2001

CANADIAN RURAL PARTNERSHIP
RURAL DIALOGUE

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A faint, sepia-toned background image of a rural scene, possibly a farm or a small town, with buildings and trees visible through a light, textured overlay.

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**Ontario
Rural Dialogue 2001**

**Emo Session
July 10, 2001**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the contributions made by the rural citizens of Emo and the surrounding area who participated in the Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001. Their thoughtful discussions and insights made it possible to identify the rural assets most valued in that part of Ontario and the strategies that should be adopted to sustain them. Our thanks go to the local coordinators and the local steering committee members for bringing together a diverse group of participants and for planning a successful dialogue session. Thanks are also due to the Ontario Agricultural Training Institute for the overall coordination of the dialogue session, and to PEOPLEnergy and the local facilitators for facilitating the session. The session would not have been possible without the generous funding provided by Human Resources Development Canada, Health Canada, the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario and Public Works and Government Services Canada. Our sincere appreciation for their generosity.

The Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 is an initiative of Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Rural Team-Ontario. The partners in the endeavour were the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; The Ontario Rural Council; and the University of Guelph. A heartfelt thanks to our partners.

FOREWORD

A total of six Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions were held — in Kemptville (eastern Ontario), Alfred (Francophone), Ridgetown (southwestern Ontario), Guelph (central Ontario), New Liskeard (northeastern Ontario), and Emo (northwestern Ontario) — during June and July 2001.

This document is a record of discussions that took place at the Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions in Emo on July 10, 2001. Many of the discussions took place in brainstorming sessions at which no limits were placed on the participants. Views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Government of Canada. In order to present a true report of the free-ranging discussions, recommendations made by participants that fall outside federal jurisdiction are also included. Participant recommendations contained in this report are recorded as they were heard. We thank session participants for their comments.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	3
THE ASSETS APPROACH TO VALUING RURAL ONTARIO.....	3
PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS.....	4
<i>Citizen Strategies.....</i>	4
<i>Government Strategies.....</i>	4
INTRODUCTION	5
THE RURAL DIALOGUE PROCESS	5
OVERVIEW OF THE ASSETS APPROACH.....	6
RURAL ASSETS RANKING	7
INDIVIDUAL RURAL ASSET RANKING	7
LARGE-GROUP RURAL ASSET RANKING	7
STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINING KEY RURAL ASSETS	8
HEALTH	8
<i>Citizen Strategies.....</i>	8
<i>Government Strategies.....</i>	9
AGRICULTURE.....	9
<i>Citizen Strategies.....</i>	9
<i>Government Strategies.....</i>	10
TELECOMMUNICATIONS.....	10
<i>Citizen Strategies.....</i>	10
<i>Government Strategies.....</i>	10
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	10
<i>Citizen Strategies.....</i>	10
<i>Government Strategies.....</i>	11
EDUCATION AND TRAINING	11
<i>Citizen Strategies.....</i>	11
<i>Government Strategies.....</i>	11
WATER.....	12
<i>Citizen Strategies (Water Quality)</i>	12
<i>Citizen Strategies (Water Diversion)</i>	12
<i>Government Strategies (Water Quality)</i>	12
<i>Government Strategies (Water Diversion).....</i>	12
ROADS.....	13
<i>Citizen Strategies.....</i>	13
<i>Government Strategies.....</i>	13
RECOMMENDATIONS	13
CITIZEN STRATEGIES	13
GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES	13
COMMON THEMES.....	14
NEXT STEPS	14

APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS.....	15
APPENDIX B: THE PROCESS OF VALUING ASSETS IN RURAL ONTARIO.....	16
APPENDIX C: "ASSET VOTING" RESULTS	17
APPENDIX D: KEY RURAL ASSETS DISCUSSED IN SMALL WORKING GROUPS: DEFINITIONS/RESOURCES/THREATS	18
TELECOMMUNICATIONS.....	18
INDIVIDUAL RURAL ASSET RANKING	18
LARGE-GROUP ASSET VALUING	18
<i>Definition of "Telecommunications"</i>	18
<i>Resources Sustaining "Telecommunications"</i>	19
EDUCATION AND TRAINING	19
INDIVIDUAL RURAL ASSET RANKING	19
LARGE-GROUP ASSET VALUING	19
<i>Definition of "Education and Training"</i>	19
<i>Resources Sustaining "Education and Training"</i>	19
<i>Threats to "Education and Training"</i>	20
WATER.....	20
INDIVIDUAL RURAL ASSET RANKING	20
LARGE-GROUP ASSET VALUING	20
<i>Definition of "Water"</i>	20
<i>Resources Sustaining "Water"</i>	21
ROADS	21
INDIVIDUAL RURAL ASSET RANKING	21
LARGE-GROUP ASSET VALUING	21
<i>Definition of "Roads"</i>	21
<i>Resources Sustaining "Roads"</i>	22
HEALTH	22
INDIVIDUAL RURAL ASSET RANKING	22
LARGE-GROUP ASSET VALUING	22
<i>Definition of "Health"</i>	22
<i>Resources Sustaining "Health"</i>	23
<i>Threats To "Health"</i>	23
AGRICULTURE.....	24
INDIVIDUAL RURAL ASSET RANKING	24
LARGE-GROUP ASSET VALUING	24
<i>Definition of "Agriculture"</i>	24
<i>Resources Sustaining "Agriculture"</i>	24
<i>Threats to "Agriculture"</i>	25
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	25
INDIVIDUAL RURAL ASSET RANKING	25
LARGE-GROUP ASSET VALUING	25
<i>Definition of "Economic Development"</i>	25
<i>Resources Sustaining "Economic Development"</i>	26
<i>Threats to "Economic Development"</i>	26

Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001

Emo Session

Executive Summary

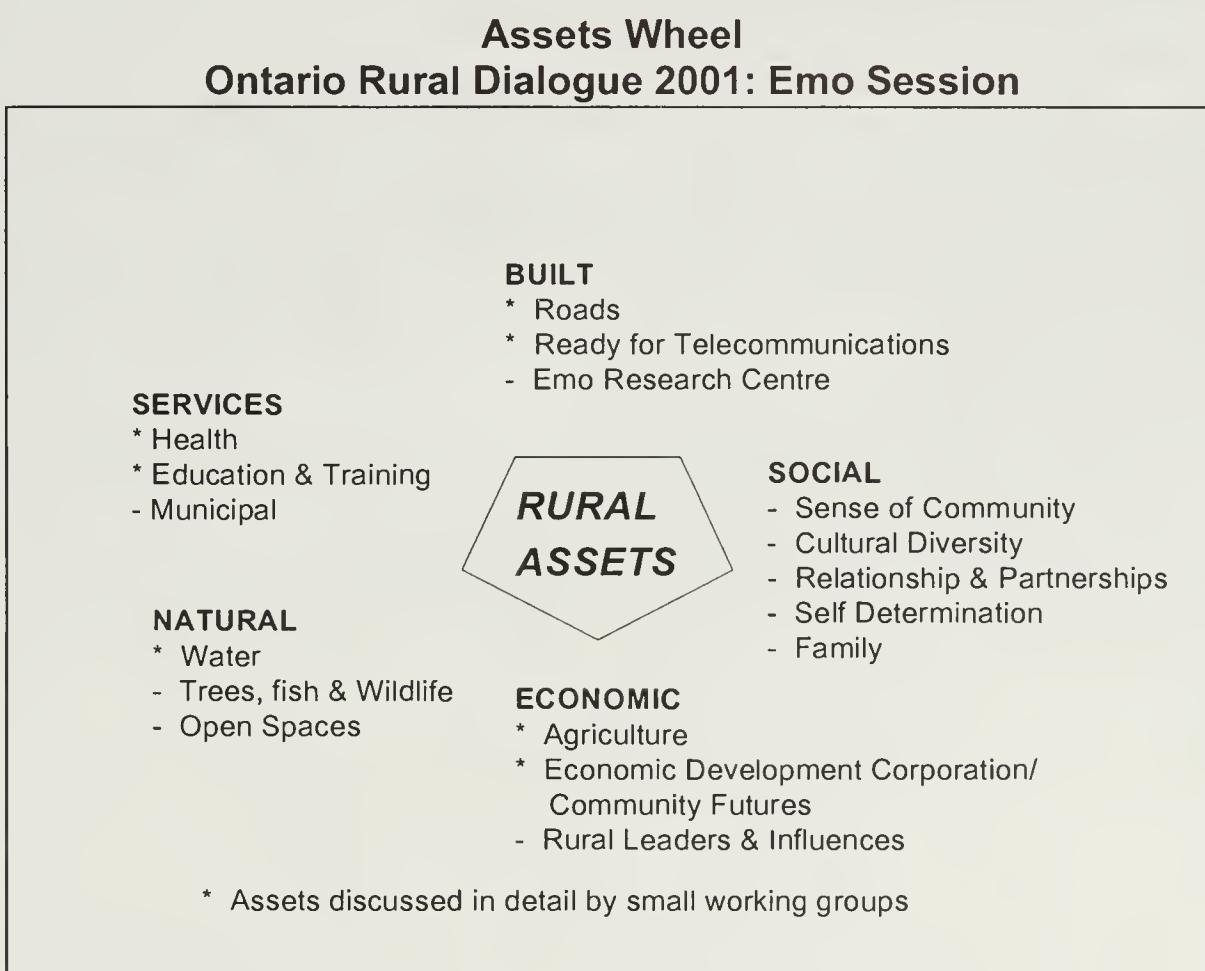
Introduction

The last of six Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions was held in northwestern Ontario. Approximately thirty-five rural residents from a variety of age groups, interests and occupational categories met in Emo on July 10, 2001, to discuss positive perspectives on rural values and priorities as part of the Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 process.

The Assets Approach to Valuing Rural Ontario

An **assets-based approach** was used to enable participants to focus on the strengths and resources of rural and remote communities and to identify threats to these assets. Participants then discussed positive strategies for citizen and government action to sustain key assets.

Participants identified and defined the key rural assets within **five asset bundles — built (infrastructure), social, economic, natural, and services**. The following diagram identifies the key rural assets in each asset bundle.



Through a voting and discussion process, the Emo participants identified the rural assets they value most: **health, water, agriculture, (telecommunications, economic development, education and training, roads, sense of community, wildlife and cultural diversity.**

Participant Recommendations

After meeting in focus groups, participants came together to present strategies that could utilize resources and mitigate threats to sustain the identified assets. By vote, the group identified the following strategies as most significant:

Citizen Strategies

- Create venture capital fund for northwestern Ontario
- Develop action plan to support Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) research station
- Lobby telecommunication companies, municipal, provincial and federal governments to get infrastructure in place
- Coordinate all available facilities for public use
- Encourage dialogue between native and non-native groups to discuss health service delivery and optimization of resources

Government Strategies

- Secure long-term planning and commitment to economic development; e.g., commitment to long-term funding
- Get Internet technology up to speed (in classrooms)
- Equalize access to health care
- “Listen – take action” – allow flexibility to address local economic priorities and supply stable long-term funding
- Partner with infrastructure facility deliverers (e.g., partner with telecommunication companies to provide access to telephone/Internet)
- Expand infrastructure funding (telecommunications, sewage/water, industrial park)
- Use Goods and Services Tax (GST) now being refunded to American guests to pay for their use of the roads

Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001

Emo Session

Date: July 10, 2001

Location: Canadian Legion Hall

Introduction

The last of six Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 Sessions was held in northwestern Ontario. Thirty-five rural residents from a variety of age groups, interests and occupational categories met in Emo on July 10, 2001, to discuss positive perspectives on rural values and priorities as part of the Rural Dialogue process. A demographic profile of participants is presented in Appendix A. After identifying the key rural assets (strengths) of the region, participants discussed the resources that sustain the assets and threats that may affect them. They then identified citizen and government strategies to sustain the assets for the future.

The Rural Dialogue Process

In 1998, the federal government launched the Canadian Rural Partnership (CRP) to support community development by adopting new approaches and practices to respond to rural and remote development issues.

The Rural Dialogue, a key citizen-engagement component of CRP, is an ongoing two-way discussion between the federal government and Canadians from rural and remote regions. The Dialogue helps the federal government understand local and regional challenges and opportunities, and it gives rural and remote citizens an opportunity to influence federal government decision making on policies and programs.

The Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 process was designed to continue this dialogue. It was led by the Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Rural Team-Ontario (RT-O), representing many federal departments and provincial ministries. Other partners in the process were the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA); The Ontario Rural Council (TORC); and the University of Guelph (UoG). Funding for the dialogue was provided by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Health Canada (HC), the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor), and Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC).

Overview of the Assets Approach

Assets are what we want to keep, build upon and sustain for future generations.

Assessing and measuring rural assets is a **positive way** of valuing what we have and want to keep in rural Canada. Using an assets approach allows us to generate a total picture of the features and characteristics of rural life that are most valued by rural citizens. The information acquired in this data-gathering approach identifies and affirms what we **all** think is important about rural life. It becomes vital information for political and strategic representation of the “rural.” Assets-building connects people to a common cause. It brings us together, focuses our attention and points us in the same direction.

The assets approach is both positive and inclusive:

- Rural assets sustain livelihoods in both rural **and** urban areas.
- Assets include both **public and private** goods.

Important areas for action have traditionally been identified through a needs-assessment process. This approach identifies “problems” — areas that need attention because something is wrong or missing. In contrast, the assets approach emphasizes positives to identify resources on which to build.

A commonly voiced concern about the assets approach is that it does not sufficiently acknowledge legitimate rural needs. This, however, is not the case. What appear as “needs” in the needs-assessment approach appear as “assets that are threatened” in the assets approach, or as resources that are not being utilized. (As an example, consider low levels of employment, which, in the assets approach, are considered to be an asset of a population available to work). Thus, the assets approach does identify “needs,” but it examines them in the context of the larger resource pool. This enables participants to recognize the value of all of the assets in rural areas and to identify strategies to sustain the most important assets, rather than to focus solely on the assets that appear to be most threatened at the time.

Assets are often measured by calculating the total value of goods and services produced in rural areas. Such assets are mathematical and can be expressed as gross domestic product (GDP). The assets approach adds the view of what is important about rural Canada from the perspective of the rural population, the people who live and work amid the rural assets themselves.

In summary, rural assets are those popularly recognized attributes of rural areas that are considered essential for the maintenance of livelihoods, both rural and urban, and vital to sustainability of the economy, society and the environment of rural Canada.

Rural Assets Ranking

The process of identifying assets is new to most people. Over the past 30 years, processes for determining priorities for action have emphasized identifying needs. The needs-assessment approach focuses on problems and negatives. The assets approach helps people focus on positives while including the total picture of both positives and negatives.

It takes time to adjust to this new way of thinking. To enable participants to work with this new method and to focus on positives, the valuing of identified assets occurred in several stages. For details of the process, see **“The Process of Valuing Assets in Rural Ontario”** (Appendix B).

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

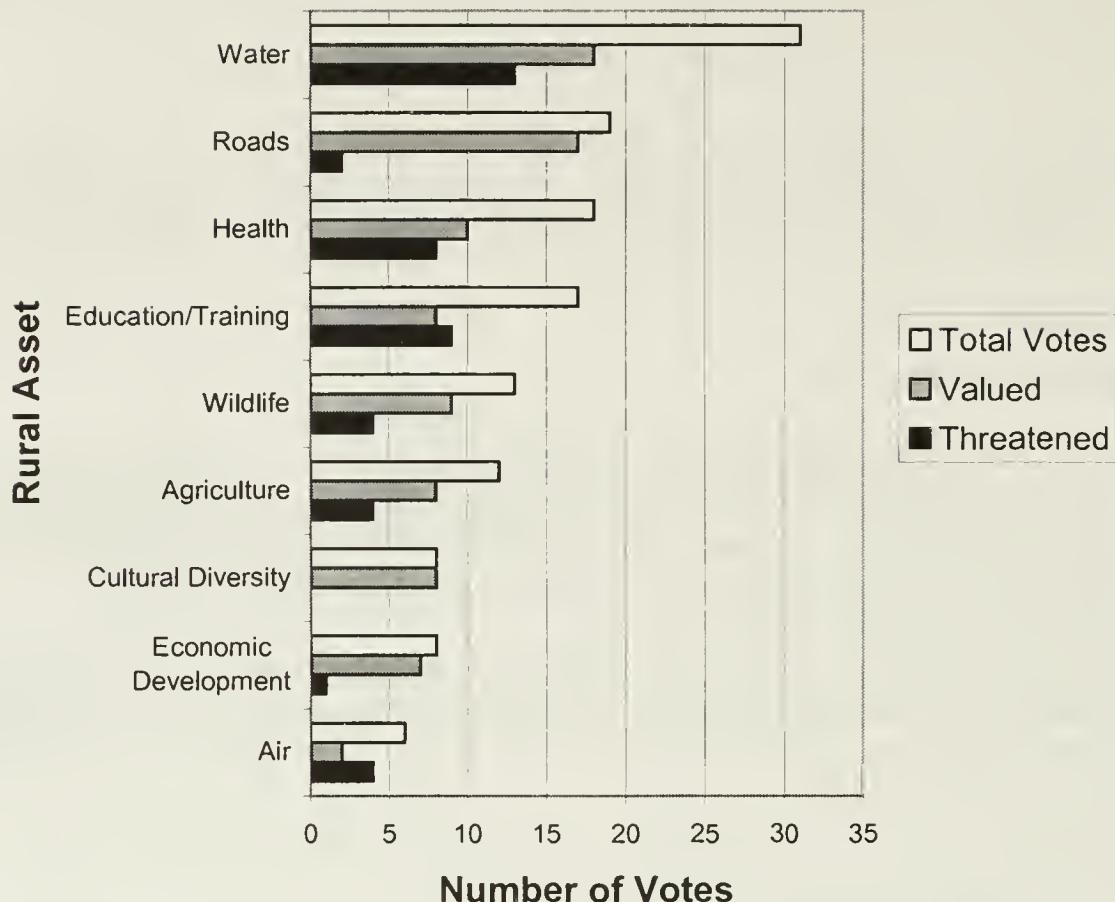
Over the course of the day, participants established in many ways the relative value of the assets they had identified. After the initial morning discussions, participants were asked to individually rank the assets on separate forms. **Individual asset ranking percentages are reported under each key rural asset discussed by small working groups.**

Because there is significant overlap in the definition of rural assets, they cannot be ranked precisely. For example, water and health, two commonly identified rural assets, are frequently cited in reference to the same issues. Therefore, it is a matter of judgement whether they should be considered one asset or two.

Large-group Rural Asset Ranking

Before the individual assets were ranked, participants undertook a large-group “asset voting” process, using blue and red dots (see Appendix C for results). This enabled them to consider the relative value of the assets they had identified and the extent to which they were valued (blue dots) or threatened (red dots). The following graph represents the top nine assets that were identified in the large group asset voting process. It shows the total number of votes, as well as the breakdown of assets considered to be valued and threatened.

TOP NINE ASSETS IDENTIFIED AT EMO SESSION



Strategies for Sustaining Key Rural Assets

Citizen and government strategies developed by the Rural Dialogue participants for the key rural assets discussed in detail by small working groups are listed in the following pages. Individual and large-group asset ranking, definitions for assets, resources sustaining the assets and threats to the assets identified by participants are found in Appendix D.

Health

Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Coordinate all available facilities for public use
- 2) Encourage dialogue between native and non-native groups to discuss health service delivery and optimization of resources

Other citizen strategies

- Through community development agencies, establish a plan for a “community,” both local and regional, to implement broadband technology (health services would be one player)
- Establish “Smart Communities” so that citizens can use the technology
- Establish a social coordinating body (e.g., Social Planning Council)
- Promote “healthy communities”

Government Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Equalize access to health care for rural and remote citizens – move toward a one-tier health care system
- 2) Educate into change (lifestyles)

Other government strategies:

- Fund broadband development in First Nations, rural and remote communities first
- Provide support to help communities and community-based groups gain access to government programs and services (money for transportation, physical meetings/facilitator/pathfinder)
- Remove costs of health service from property tax base (to be solely income-tax based)
- Reduce the local portion needed to access grants to an affordable level (1/3 is too much for rural and remote)
- Support education of rural and remote communities on programs and services; help them understand how they can benefit from the programs and new technology.

Agriculture

Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Put on agenda of Rainy River Federation of Agriculture and Kenora Federation of Agriculture to discuss how to encourage banks to provide farm credit advice on site
- 2) Develop a local action plan to support OMAFRA services and the Research station

Other citizen strategies:

- Research the former Young Farmers start-up program
- Develop a listing of required services and delivery/access issues to support agriculture
- Develop a quasi-business plan where costs and benefits are identified: “What are the deliverables?”
- Maintain pressure to ensure that large animal veterinary project proceeds

Government Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Bring banks to the table to discuss how to support industry
- 2) Partner with infrastructure facility delivery

Other government strategies:

- Provide information/reports on available programs
- Provide access to funding for individuals to provide services

Telecommunications

Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Lobby telecommunication companies and municipal, provincial and federal governments to get infrastructure in place.
- 2) Communities should purchase services together to lower overall costs

Other citizen strategies:

- Build coalitions with health care, educators, public sector and large industry

Government Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) CRTC should change rules to open up markets and boost frequency (amplification)
- 2) Research alternatives to traditional Internet delivery systems

Other government strategies:

- Funding

Economic Development

Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Secure stable, long-term planning and commitment to economic development
- 2) Create a venture capital fund for northwestern Ontario (north of Thunder Bay)

Other citizen strategies:

- Continue to develop leaders and staff through training, seminars, trade schools; e.g., at Confederation College
- Lobby for partnerships in funding between the federal, provincial, and local governments and the private sector

- Develop the spirit of entrepreneurship; e.g., Junior Achievement, Northern Venture Initiative, Co-op Programs
- Encourage partnerships between First Nations, municipalities, private sector, regional, international
- Identify lands available for industrial and business development

Government Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Allow flexibility to address local economic priorities and supply stable long-term funding
- 2) Expand infrastructure funding, for telecommunications, sewer/water, etc., for industrial parks.

Other government strategies:

- Reduce and eliminate red tape
- Listen and take action

Education and Training

Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Develop strong parent councils to ensure local input and funding for schools
- 2) Guidance counsellors should promote local college as an inexpensive transition option between high school and university

Government Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Federal and provincial governments must get back into the business of funding skills training (upgrading for adults)
- 2) Get Internet technology up to speed

Other government strategies:

- Provide incentives and job opportunities for youth who have left for education and to keep youth here
- A provincial Northern tax credit
- Provide infrastructure to entice business to locate here – job opportunities
- Provide tax credits to entice business to locate here – job opportunities
- Make it less expensive for students to attend post-secondary institutions
 - Reward success
- Smaller class sizes
 - Teacher dissatisfaction
 - Change funding formula
- Keep teachers happy by providing:
 - Preparation time
 - Classroom assistants (college work experience and parent volunteers)

- Encourage more co-op programs
- Incentives to keep teachers current

Water

Citizen Strategies (Water Quality)

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Educate public on the causes and effects of pollution (corporate, municipal, personal) through public and private sources (look at long and short term – costs involve economic, health, and environment) and deliver message in schools, newsletters, radio
- 2) Develop organized strategic plan for incorporated and unincorporated areas on water course

Citizen Strategies (Water Diversion)

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Educate public on impact of water diversion locally and on whole – watercourse pros and cons
- 2) Involve Rainy River District Municipal Association and First Nations to develop a watercourse management strategy to bring forward a collective voice

Government Strategies (Water Quality)

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Provincial government ministries should encourage, direct, and fund unincorporated area participation
- 2) Federal government should take a lead role in quality research and development – fund provincial and municipal projects

Government Strategies (Water Diversion)

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Hold town hall meeting, including all levels of government, First Nations and community leaders
- 2) Explain government policy and concerns over water diversion plans: Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), Ministry of Environment (MOE), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

Roads

Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Impose special levies for road improvements
- 2) Analyse road use to ensure that all users are making a contribution

Other citizen strategies:

- Develop a plan that considers long-term excellence in roads

Government Strategies

Participants identified the following strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Use GST now being refunded to U.S. guests to pay for their use of the roads
- 2) Develop plan for municipal and First Nations road renewal and development with provincial and federal funding; no hoops to access to funding

Other government strategies:

- “Roads” lotteries
- When the Crown owns and develops a property within a municipal boundary (timber/mineral rights), Crown should compensate municipality

Recommendations

As the day was ending, participants gathered to present the strategies recommended by the five focus groups. Participants then voted individually on what they believed to be the best three citizen and government strategies overall.

Citizen Strategies

- Create venture capital fund for northwestern Ontario
- Develop action plan to support OMAFRA research station
- Lobby telecommunication companies, municipal, provincial and federal governments to get infrastructure in place
- Coordinate all available facilities for public use
- Encourage dialogue between native and non-native groups to discuss health service delivery and optimization of resources

Government Strategies

- Secure long-term planning and commitment to economic development; e.g., commitment to long-term funding
- Get Internet technology up to speed (in classrooms)
- Equalize access to health care
- “Listen – take action” – allow flexibility to address local economic priorities and supply stable long-term funding

- Partner with infrastructure facility deliverers (e.g., partner with telecommunication companies to provide access to telephone/Internet)
- Expand infrastructure funding (telecommunications, sewage/water, industrial park)
- Use GST now being refunded to U.S. guests to pay for their use of the roads

Common Themes

- Education
- Government policy
- Government enforcement of regulations
- Publicity
- Supporting infrastructure, particularly telecommunications
- Lack of coordination between local groups
- Out-migration of professionals
- Increased demand for services
- Increased competition, internationally
- Low population density

Next Steps

The Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions took place in six regions across Ontario. Information from all sessions will be amalgamated and analysed in a comprehensive picture of the assets valued by citizens in rural Ontario. Results of this larger analysis and the information from the Ontario Regional Rural Conference 2001 held in North Bay, Ontario, August 26-28, 2001, will be incorporated into a final report.

The final report will reflect a comprehensive portrait of key rural assets in Ontario, along with the strategies recommended by conference participants.

Appendix A: Demographic Profile of Participants

The Rural Dialogue process is designed to represent all citizens living in rural Ontario. Enough demographic information was collected from participants to identify the diversity of participants and to pinpoint which ideas were expressed by specific groups, such as farmers and youth. The following numbers are based on the 31 completed profile forms submitted by participants.

Demographic features of the Emo session:

- ⇒ 58% of participants (18 of 31) were female, 42% were male
- ⇒ 48% were 46–64 years old, 32% were between 30 and 45, and 16% were youth (under 29)
- ⇒ 39% of participants live in towns under 25, 000 population, 26% live in rural non-farm residences, 19% live on farms
- ⇒ 65% of participants have lived in their local area for at least 20 years
- ⇒ none of the participants have lived in their local area for less than 5 years
- ⇒ 42% of participants listed **government** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 34% of participants described themselves as self-employed
- ⇒ 21% of participants listed **business or commerce** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 13% of participants listed **farming** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 12% of participants listed **social services** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 10% of participants were retired
- ⇒ 74% of participants reported total household incomes of over \$40,000

Overall, a diverse group of rural citizens participated in the Rural Dialogue at Emo.

Appendix B: The Process of Valuing Assets in Rural Ontario

All of the information presented by participants was gathered into a “data set,” which includes information both from and about the participants. Information from all six dialogue sessions will be amalgamated and analysed in a comprehensive picture of the assets valued by the citizens of rural Ontario.

- ⇒ **Participant Profile:** As part of the registration process, participants were asked to complete a two-page Participant Profile, which included demographic information. This information will be used to characterize the diversity of participants and to identify which ideas were expressed by specific groups, such as farmers and youth.
- ⇒ **Assets Wheel:** Participants created a comprehensive list of the key rural assets under five asset bundles: built (infrastructure), social, economic, natural, and services.
- ⇒ **Assets Voting:** Participants were given seven blue dots to indicate the assets they valued most, and three red dots to indicate the assets which they believed to be most threatened at this time. Assets Voting Results can be found in Appendix C.
- ⇒ **Comprehensive Overview of Key Assets:** The three assets with the most votes in each of the asset bundles were posted at the front of the room and discussed. This enabled participants to think about what other rural residents valued as rural assets.
- ⇒ **Assets Ranking:** Following the group discussion, participants were given a second opportunity to rank the rural assets. Participants were asked to identify the five assets that they, as individuals, valued the most. These asset rankings were collected on individual sheets.
- ⇒ **Asset Working Groups:** Participants then broke into working groups to discuss the characteristics and issues surrounding a particular asset. Working group discussions were organized around the following:
 - ⇒ Asset Definition
 - ⇒ Resources Sustaining the Asset
 - ⇒ Threats to the Asset
 - ⇒ Recommended Citizen Strategies for Sustaining the Asset
 - ⇒ Recommended Government Strategies for Sustaining the Asset

Large group Recommendations: As the day ended, each focus group presented its recommendations for government and citizens. All the participants voted on their top three citizen strategies and their top three government strategies.

Appendix C: “Asset Voting” Results

During the morning session, participants were asked to identify, and then vote on the rural assets they believed to be most important to rural lives. Participants were given seven blue dots to indicate the assets that they valued most, and an additional three red dots to indicate the assets they believed to be most threatened. The totals for all of the assets identified are listed below. The blue dot totals are listed first, separated by a comma from the red dot totals.

Built

Roads – 17,2
 Ready for telecommunications – 0,17
 Emo Research Centre – 6,0
 Hospitals – 6,0
 Schools – 4,0
 Railroad – 1,0
 Day Centre – 1,0
 Golf – 0,0
 Atha Baska Interpretive Centre – 0,0
 Historical Centre – 0,0
 Bridges – 0,0
 Theatre Thomson – 0,0
 Ski hills – 0,0
 Winter roads – 0,0
 Fair grounds – 0,0
 Office buildings – 0,0
 Provincial parks – 1,1
 Farms – 1,3
 Sewage & water – 2,0
 Natural Gas/Electricity – 2,3
 Waterways – 1,0
 Air – 16,0
 Fish hatcheries farm – 1,0
 Churches – 0,0
 Museum – 0,0
 Library – 0,0
 Housing – 1,0
 Hiking and walking trails – 0,0
 Snowmobile – 0,0
 Stock car tracks – 0,0
 Community tours – 0,0

Services

Health – 10,8
 Education & training – 8,9
 Child care – 1,0
 RRV Safety Coalition
 MNDM/Landfill – 1,0
 Municipal – 2,3
 Fire Protection – 2,2
 RRFDC “Network” – 3,0
 Elderly & Disabled – 1,0
 Fed Nor – 0,0
 Policing – 0,0
 Health Access
 Centre/Administration Youth

Economic

Agriculture – 8,4
 Economic Development Corporation/
 Community Futures – 7,1
 Partnership/Networking Development – 4,0
 Programs for Economic Development – 3,0
 Job Opportunities – 0,0
 Size, Forestry – 1,3
 Seniors – 0,0
 Tourism – 1,0
 People looking for work – 0,1
 Rural Leaders & Influences – 5,0
 Diversified Jobs – 0,1
 Potential – 0,0
 Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit – 0,3
 Manufacturing “value-added – 3,1
 Border/Centre of N.A – 3,0
 Prime Land/Resources – 2,0
 Growth – 1,1
 Quefico Centre – 0,0
 Access to Capital – 1,0
 Insurance Funding – 1,0

Social

Sense of community – 1,1
 Cultural diversity – 8,0
 Security & safety – 3
 Relationship & Partnership – 4,0
 Self Determination – 2,2
 Family – 4,0
 Service club/volunteer – 1,0
 Peaceful – 0,0
 Good for kids – 0,0
 Weddings/funerals – 0,0
 Fish fries – 0,0
 Friendliness – 0,0
 Churches – 0,0
 Sporting events – 0,0
 Concern for others
 The annual – 0,0
 Dances – 0,0
 Heritage – 0,0

Natural

Water – 18,13
 Open spaces – 7,0
 Air 2,4
 People 5,0
 Land 2,0
 Rocks fences – 0,0
 Trees/fish/wildlife – 9,4
 Soil – 0,0
 Resources: Mineral, Mining 1,1
 Weather – (\$ seasons) – 0,0

Appendix D: Key Rural Assets Discussed in Small Working Groups: Definitions/Resources/Threats

Through a voting process, participants were asked to identify five key rural assets that they, as individuals, valued most from the list of key rural assets identified by the large-group asset voting process.

Telecommunications

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Telecommunications appeared in the top five individual rural asset rankings for 29% percent of participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Telecommunications** was identified as the most significant asset in the “built” asset bundle.

Participants gave “telecommunications” 17 votes:

- 0 blue (valued)
- 17 red (threatened)

Definition of “Telecommunications”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “telecommunications”:

- Pent-up demand for telecommunications
- Canada is one of the most connected communities in the world
- 92% of households in Fort Frances with children in elementary school have computers
- Half of households in Atikokan have Internet connection
- High school computer-to-student ratio = 1:3
- Hospitals and school boards are purchasing services internally (i.e., Information Technology) because not available in the community
- Government has T1 dedicated lines to offices across Canada
- Many economic development opportunities require broadband access
- Banks do 70% of customer service over the Internet
- Delivery of education off-campus to small communities
- Automated Teller Machine (ATM) use has skyrocketed

Resources Sustaining “Telecommunications”

- Hope that broadband service will be available: therefore, demand will increase, applications will develop, etc.
- Training people to use and develop applications
- Will facilitate technology-related jobs and businesses

Education and Training

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Education and Training appeared in the top five assets ranking for 65% of participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Education and Training** was identified as the most significant asset in the “economic” asset bundle.

Participants gave “education and training” 16 votes:

- 12 blue (valued)
- 4 red (threatened)

Definition of “Education and Training”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “education and training”:

- Quality improving
- Equipping people for future – train for jobs
- Increase skills (labour)
- Facilities and staff
 - Infrastructure within district
 - Secondary and post-secondary education
- Lots of jobs in sector
- Early childhood education – preschool, Jr. Kindergarten
- Whole continuum – primary to post-secondary to adult learning (college and university)

Resources Sustaining “Education and Training”

- Staff need to stay up to date
- Government funding
 - Mainstream – Provincial
 - Aboriginal – Federal
 - Upgrades – HRDC
- Current equipment and textbooks
- Volunteer centres – adult literacy education
- Physical infrastructure

- Trainees expected to pay their own way
- Fee for service – \$46/day preschool!
- Telecom – high speed broadband access
 - Reduce cost to learner

Threats to “Education and Training”

- Declining population – youth out-migration
 - Rural population declining
 - Negative impact on provincial funding
- People leave for education and do not come back – shortage of professionals
- Government passing on costs to students – downloading
- Travel
 - Bussing
 - Adult education
- Lack of Telecom
- Teacher dissatisfaction
- Private schools
- Lack of critical mass to offer certain specialized courses
- Most effective way to upgrade and remain current is through Internet

Water

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Water appeared in the top five assets ranking for 65% of participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Water** was identified as the second most significant asset in the “natural” asset bundle.

Participants gave “water” 16 votes:

- blue (valued)
- red (threatened)

Definition of “Water”

Participants identified the following elements contributing to the value they place on “water”:

- Water in terms of quality (drinking)
- Water issues around diversion to other areas

Resources Sustaining “Water”

- Treatment plants
- Government policy (compliance)
- Northwestern Health Unit (people’s health, monitoring increased domestically)
 - Kenora-Rainy River District: monitor, sample, and contract
 - Ministry of Environment: labs
- Corporate policies – mills
- More informed public; people are more concerned
- Publicity
- Good management – municipalities, corporations – more qualified and educated people
- Environmental assessment and impact and mitigation
- Tourism strong economic driver
- Lake development controlled
- Eco-tourism-European and U.S.

Roads

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Roads appeared in the top five assets ranking for 29% of participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Roads** were identified as the second most significant asset in the “built” asset bundle.

Participants gave “roads” 19 votes:

- 17 blue (valued)
- 2 red (threatened)

Definition of “Roads”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “roads”:

- Roads connect most of the communities
- Method of transportation
- Are currently being improved and maintained well (provincial)
- Municipally, different story – difficult to set aside funds to repair
- Scenic routes/soothing
- A community system re: seeing one another
- Support transportation of goods and services/people for economic purposes

Resources Sustaining “Roads”

- Tourism initiatives raise the profile of roads
- Funding for repair/maintenance
- Sand and gravel readily available
- Balance off weight/length of trucks on roads
- Available labour re: construction
- Continued research re: appropriate road materials
- Utilize road engineers and contractors who understand climate conditions/topography of northwestern Ontario
- Connect to Interstate highways, TransCanada, and ports of entry (Rainy River, Fort Frances, Pigeon River, Sault Ste. Marie)

Health

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Health appeared in the top five individual rural assets ranking for 68% of the participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Health** was identified as the most significant asset in the “service” asset bundle.

Participants gave “health” 48 votes:

- 28 blue (valued)
- 20 red (threatened)

Definition of “Health”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “health”:

- Hospitals
- Education about substance abuse
- Awareness of the choices we make
- Nutrition
- Healthy lifestyle
- Availability of professional health services
- Accessibility of services
- Money/economics
- Travel grants
- Strong link to economic vitality of community
- Wellness

Resources Sustaining “Health”

- District Health Council
- Health Access Centres
- Hospitals
- Fort Frances Clinic, Atikokan Clinic
- North-West Health Unit
 - Healthy Babies
 - Needle Exchange
- Health Inspection
- Sewage/Septic
- Water inspection
- Pharmacies
- Community Counselling
- Canadian Hearing Society
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
- Nurses/Doctors
- Dental
- Tele-health
- Valley Diabetes Club
- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
- Dependency workers
- Associations for Community Living
- Home care/health care
- Extend-a-care Facilities/Second stage housing
- Healthy community groups
- Rainy River Safety Coalition
- Service clubs
- Child care
- Crisis housing/Shelters
- Ambulance (land/air)
- Handicapped access
- Family and children’s services
- Weechi-it-le-win

Threats To “Health”

- Lack of funds
- Lack of medical professionals (doctors/nurses/dentists)
- Lack of signers (for deaf citizens)
- Lack of medical facilities
- Lack of ambulances
- New government regulations
- Accessibility to services
- Geography – great distances
- Transportation
- Demographics – do not have the population density to qualify for funding

- Lack of long-term care facilities
- Weather/climate (winter)
- Lack of rehabilitation centres
- Lack of coordination of native and non-native services/funding
- Lack of coordination of social services; e.g., Social Planning Council
- Lack of a unified health system
- Lack of education/awareness of health issues (diabetes, etc.)
- Life expectancy is five years less in northwestern Ontario than in Ontario as a whole, and we don't know why
- Lack of education on recycling to move to healthier living (forestry/ household) – disposable society
- High cost of nutritional food/fruit and vegetables
- Increased costs of living (taxation/transportation); therefore cannot pay for health costs

Agriculture

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Agriculture appeared in the top five assets ranking for 19 % of participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Agriculture** was identified as the most significant asset in the “economic” asset bundle.

Participants gave “agriculture” a total of 25 votes:

- 13 blue (valued)
- 12 red (threatened)

Definition of “Agriculture”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “agriculture”:

- Family farm
- Affordable food
- Accessible to markets
- Have equipment/money
- Land (soil), water
- Climate to support production
- Knowing how to farm: local research, sharing information, making improvements
- Human resources: resident, spirited

Resources Sustaining “Agriculture”

- Education/research: diversify, better/improve, knowing the market, training
- Access: roads to market, within communities
- Access to communications: speed to market, to knowledge, to change: weather, money

- Access land, capital, machinery, sales/service, dealers/suppliers, veterinary services, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) (in person)
- Success in planning, family farm
- Farming organizations: Cattlemen's Association, 4-H, Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFRA), Farm Safety

Threats to “Agriculture”

- Provincial government cuts
- Education/research
- OMAFRA downsized
- Lose information
- More sophisticated marketing systems
- Pricing not increasing (more efficient)
- Decrease in number of teachers
- Continued centralization of OMAFRA activities in Guelph
- Forestry activity increasing deterioration of the roads
- Lack of maintenance for port of entry
- Federal participation in port of entry not recognized; e.g., more susceptible
- Markets and competitors light years ahead in communications
- No access to financial advice
- Off-farm employment

Economic Development

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Economic Development appeared in the top five individual rural asset ranking for 16% of participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Economic Development** was identified as the second most significant asset in the “economic” asset bundle.

Participants gave “economic development” 16 votes:

- 12 blue (valued)
- 4 red (threatened)

Definition of “Economic Development”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “economic development”:

- Build infrastructure to allow business growth
- Hard telecommunication
 - Transportation – road, rail, air
 - Sewer/water

- Power – electric, solar, wind
- Natural gas
- Soft telecommunication
 - Partnerships – government to support provinces, international, businesses, organizational
 - Information – programs/services
 - Incentives – \$\$
 - Training

Resources Sustaining “Economic Development”

- Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs)
- Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor)
- Affordable/reliable/available energy
- Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)
- Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM)
- Northern Ontario Development Network (NODN)
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)
- Municipal councils
- Leaders with vision
- Partnerships between business and public sector
- Attitude, positive outlook
- Expertise/availability of economic development staff
- Entrepreneurial “pool”
- Access to \$\$ for growth/establishing business
- Suitable education/training
- Location on Canada-United States border
- Attractive lifestyle to prospective residents

Threats to “Economic Development”

- Non-localized government/corporate decision making
- Lack of high-speed Internet telecommunication
- Aging, declining infrastructure
- Government-sponsored “red tape” (federal/provincial/local)
- Defeatist attitude
- Lack of long-term planning/vision
- Lack of sustained, long-term government funding/assistance/programs
- Lack of marketing strategy of whole area (northwestern Ontario)
- Lack of working together among communities/areas (starting to see positive change)
- Education/training limitations
- Lower education level in labour force
- More highly educated or trained leave the area (net loss)
- Shortage of professionals; e.g., doctors

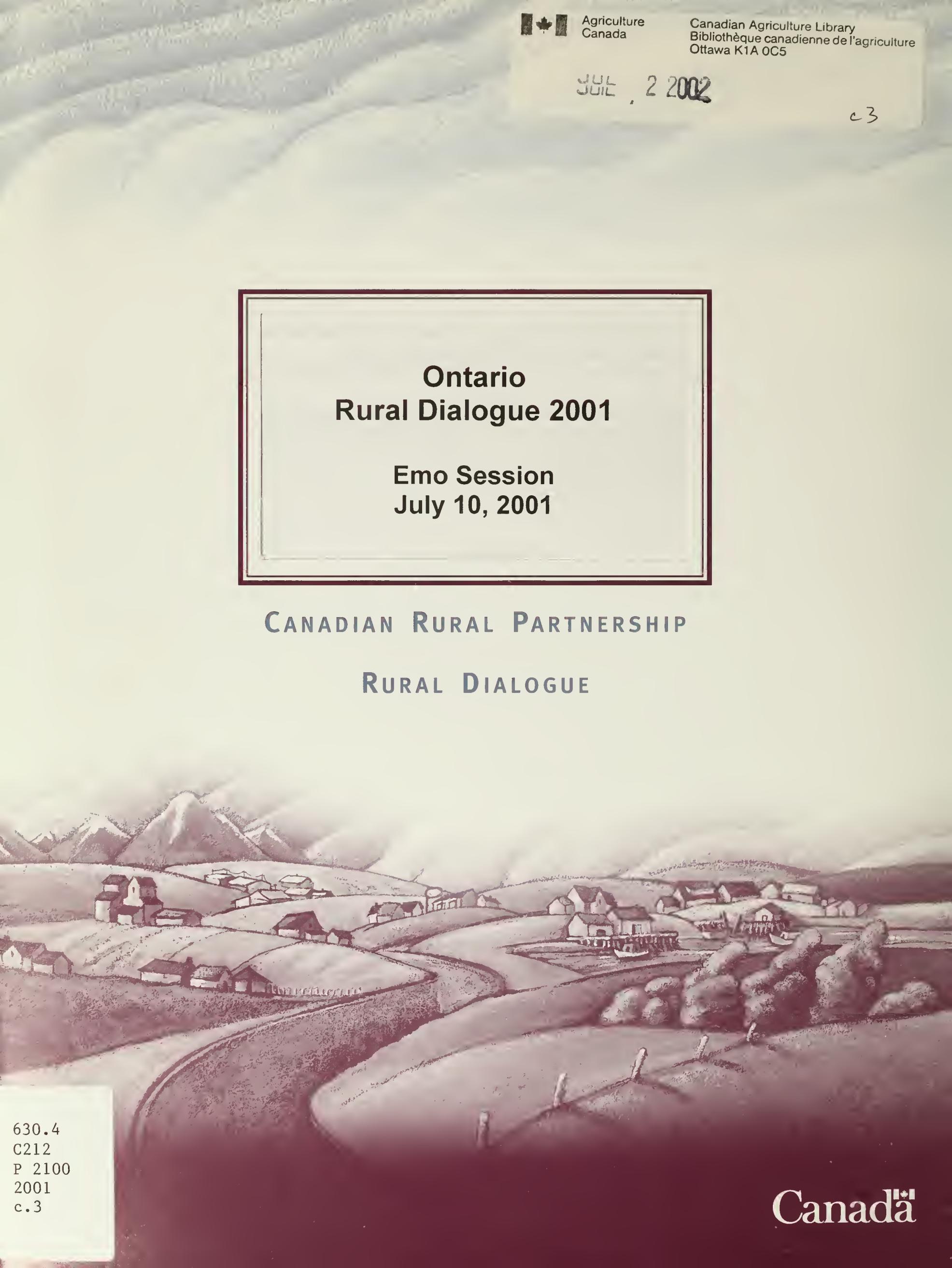
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